ON SCENE

THE NATIONAL MARITIME SAR REVIEW

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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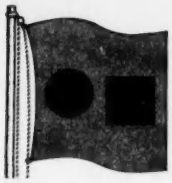
PANIC AMONG SURVIVORS

In a recent case where a cutter attempted to remove a large number of refugees from an overcrowded boat, the refugees crowded to one side of their unstable boat and capsized it. Luckily, practically all of them were recovered from the water. This incident brought to mind another which occurred some years ago in which a helicopter was trying to evacuate stranded flood victims from the roof of a building when the group of survivors panicked and, despite the efforts of the helicopter crew, swarmed aboard in such numbers that the helicopter crashed.

In both instances, the survivors apparently feared that they might not be rescued even though rescue was at hand and their fears resulted in a worsening of the situation to a very dangerous point. SAR personnel should be aware of this very human urge to be saved promptly after an ordeal, the panic it may induce, and the danger that the panic may present to both the survivors and the rescue crews.

When a situation is recognized as one which might generate panic among survivors, steps appropriate to the situation should be taken to inform the survivors of the actions which will be taken to effect an orderly rescue of all of them and to alleviate their fears. The rescue crew should be alert to the first signs of panic so as to maneuver to protect the safety of the rescue operation.

ON SCENE is a SAR publication published by the Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard as a source of information concerning current and proposed procedures as well as new developments in SAR. Articles contained herein are non-record and non-directive.



Visual Distress Signals to Be Required

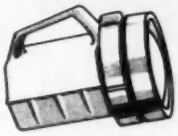
Editor's Note: Reprinted from the Boating Safety Newsletter, Fall 1980

Effective the first of January 1981, boats on the coastal waters of the U. S. and U. S. registry boats on the high seas must carry visual distress signals. This according to the new subpart C of part 175, Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, issued under the authority of the Federal Boating Safety Act of 1971, 14 U. S. Code 1454 and 1488.

On boats 16-feet or more in length or carrying six or less passengers, certified or approved visual distress signals in the proper number must be carried for both day and night use. For boats under 16-feet operating at night, only the certified or approved signals for night use must be carried. The three exemptions from the rule are: (a) boats competing in an organized marine parade, regatta, race or similar event; (b) manually propelled boats and; (c) sailboats under 26-feet with completely open construction and without propulsion machinery.

In the visual distress signal regulation, two definitions are important. "Coastal Waters" is defined as, "the Great Lakes and territorial seas of the U. S., and bays and sounds which empty into these waters. Rivers inside a line tangent to their headlands are not included unless the distance across the river is over two miles. All portions of a river from the mouth to the point where the river first narrows to two miles are included." The second definition is of "Visual Distress Signals". It states, "a device that is approved by the Commandant under 46 CFR 160 and 161."

Operators of affected boats may choose from a group of approved or certified devices as long as they meet the requirement for their boats. For instance, if a boat is 20-feet long, the operator may choose to have only three pistol or hand projected parachute red flares that are approved for day and night use. If he chooses the pistol projected flares he must also have an approved launcher to fire the flares. He might choose three approved hand held orange smoke signals for day use and a certified electrically powered distress light for night use.



The range of choices is contained in the Coast Guard pamphlet "Federal Requirements for Recreational Boats" (CG-290). The recommended numbers on page 18 of the 1979 edition are also the required numbers that must be carried after January 1, 1981.

Other requirements for the visual distress signals read much like the personal flotation device (PFD) regulations. The signals must be readily accessible and in serviceable condition. "Serviceable", in this case, means that they must not only be in good physical condition, they must also have a date on them that has not expired. Also, as in the case of PFD's, the signals must be clearly marked with the approval number or certification statement.

Some non-approved pyrotechnic devices will be acceptable as meeting the requirements until July 1, 1982 so long as they remain in good and serviceable condition They are the aerial red flares, either hand held or pistol projected for the day and night requirement. Also acceptable are the hand held or floating orange smoke signals for day requirement only and signal pistols for use with cartridges accepted as meeting the approval requirements.

The final provision of the regulation prohibits the display of a visual distress signal on the waters to which this regulation applies under any circumstances except where it is needed because of immediate or potential danger to the persons on board.

EMTS - LIFESAVERS

By CDR Jim Tasker

Special Medical Operations

Since the Coast Guard's EMT School at TRACEN, Petaluma began operations in January, 1979, over 700 Coast Guard men and women have graduated as EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicans). Prior to that time, approximately 800 Coast Guard personnel were trained as EMTs through civilian schools or through the the Coast Guard schools in the Thirteenth and Seventh Districts. The greatest impact of the EMT program on SAR operations (and the biggest benefit as well) has been at Coast Guard Stations and on Patrol Boats. Most boat stations and all 95 and 82-footers have no corpemen, medical officers or physician assistants to respond on MEDEVACs. On these units the EMT is the only medically trained person available; and these EMTs already have proven their value to the SAR system. The following cases are examples of their fine work.

On the morning of September 15, 1980, MK3 Bob SOUZA, an EMT at CGS Swansboro, NC saved the life of a 14 year old girl. Group Fort Macon had received a telephone call from the local police that four swimmers had been caught in the strong current off Bogue Inlet pier. A 30-foot UTM got underway with MK3 SOUZA aboard. Subsequently three of the four persons were reported safely ashore. Three hours later, the missing person was picked up by a private boat; the person was reported as apparently dead from drowning. Shortly thereafter the UTM with SOUZA aboard arrived on-scene and the girl was transferred to his boat. SOUZA immediately began one man CPR (cardiopulmonary resusciation). This was particularly difficult because the only space available to do CPR was on the 30-footer's engine cover. Therefore another boat crewmen had to hold him around the waist while he administered the CPR. Meanwhile the boat raced to shore. MK3 SOUZA continued one-man CPR by himself for over 40 minutes en route to shore. The girl was delivered to an ambulance and was taken to the hospital. There she regained consciousness. Unfortunately, complications from her near-drowning accident set in, and she died fifteen hours later.

This case demonstrates a remarkable effort by MK3 SOUZA. One-man CPR is strenuous enough for even short periods of time, let alone for 45 minutes on the engine cover of a fast-moving 30-footer. MK3 SOUZA's determination to save the life of this girl is an example of the professionalism of a well-trained SAR crewman.

Another near-drowning incident took place this past summer at Station Port Isabel, Texas. On the afternoon of June 8th, a call came in from a local restaurant requesting an ambulance for a man who had just been pulled from the water apparently dead from drowning. SN Jeff HALL, a Coast Guard EMT, and SN

MARTIN arrived at the restaurant 2 minutes later via the Station's mobile - one. They found a crowd of spectators standing around the near-drowned victim, assuming him to be dead. SN HALL immediately performed an initial patient survey ("ABC"s Airway, Breathing, Circulation). He found that the victim was not breathing, but he still had a weak pulse. SN HALL then began mouth-to-mouth breathing while monitering the man's pulse. By the time the local ambulance arrived, thirty minutes later, the man had regained consciousness and SN HALL was giving him oxygen, Without a question SN HALL's fast action saved this man's life.

Last year another near-drowning case occurred near Station Port Isabel. A call was received stating that a woman had drowned at the North Jetty. HM3 Jim GOSS (now HM2) left at once via the station vehicle for the scene. There he saw a man walking through the surf with a body in his arms. A young woman had fallen off the pier and had struck her head. Her husband had ventured into the breakers after her, but it took approximately ten minutes before he could find her (floating face down) and carry her out of the water. By the time HM3 GOSS reached the man, he was nearly out of the water on the beach.

GOSS helped lay the woman on the hard packed sand of the beach, and he performed an initial patient survey. She was unresponsive, had no pulse and was not breathing. GOSS opened her airway, gave her four quick breaths and started one-man CPR. FNMK (now MK3) J. SOWERS, an EMT at CGS Port Isabel, arrived on the scene shortly thereafter and proceeded to assist GOSS in two-man CPR. When an ambulance arrived, GOSS continued the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and the ambulance attendant took over the chest compressions. A few minutes later, GOSS found that the woman could breath on her own and had a detectable pulse. He administered oxgen and accompanied the woman to the hospital. The woman has now fully recovered thanks to the work and skill of HM3 GOSS and MK3 SOWERS.

During May of this year, a call was received at CGS Lorain, Ohio that a 14-foot sail boat had capsized about 1 1/2 miles off shore in Lake Erie. Several attempts had been made to right the boat, and shouts for help were reported. It was then getting dark, and a storm was developing. CGS Lorain radioed its 41-foot UTB, already underway, to respond to the case; it was on-scene in approximately 30 minutes. Because of the darkness and the storm, the crew had difficulty locating the capsized sail boat. Spectators on shore helped direct the 41-footer until finally faint shouts for help were heard by the boat crewmen. Onboard was SN Tom BOSSANY, a graduate of the Coast Guard EMT School. SN BOSSANY saw one person in the water, apparently unable to swim, but wearing a PFD. A line was thrown to the victim and he was pulled into the boat. The victim was a 20-year old male who had been in the 55 degree water for a least 90 minutes. The victim was taken to the cabin and his wet clothes were removed. He was conscious, but he could barely speak or move because of hypothermia. SN BOSSANY treated the man with body-to-body rewarming for about 10 minutes. He rewarmed sufficiently to speak, and he explained that there were three other passengers on the sail boat in the water and in need of rescue. The victim refused to be taken back to shore until the other persons were found.

A search pattern was started further offshore, as the victim told the boat crew

that he had attempted to swim ashore for help. At about this time, a helo from the Erie County Sheriff's Department arrived on-scene to assist in the search. Search lights were turned on by both the Coast Guard boat and the Sheriff's helo. The weather had now turned sour with high seas and rain, making the search very difficult. Finally voices were heard in the water, and the hull of the overturned boat was illuminated by the searchlights.

Three people were spotted; two were on the hull and one was in the water. The helo drooped three divers into the water to help rescue the survivors. The victims clinging to the hull were both women, and they were both wearing PFDs. The third victim was a man who was barely able to swim and who was not wearing a PFD. SN CURTIS, one of the UIB crewmen, jumped into the water to rescue the man. He was quickly pulled into the boat and he was taken to the forward compartment where his wet clothing was removed. Meanwhile the two women and the three divers were also picked up by the 41-footer. The male victim was examined and treated by SN BOSSANY. He was severly hypothermic. He was taken to shore and transferred to a waiting ambulance. Unfortunately he later died in the hospital from complications of his severe hypothermia. Had the male victim worn a PFD and gotten out of the water on to the hull of the sail boat. he might have survived. Nonetheless, the crew of the UIB are to be commended for their handling of this difficult case and for the life saved of the first victim.

SN Mary MCDERMOTT, an EMT at CGS St. Claire Flats, Michigan, had to use all of her training and all of the recently received EMT equipment to save the life of a woman this past summer. A call was received from bystanders on an island about one and one-half miles from the Station. They reported that a man had severely beaten his wife and had thrown her into the weeds. The station dispatched their 21-footer, with SN MCDERMOTT aboard, to the scene. It was apparent on arrival that the young woman had received severe chest and abdominal injuries and was bleeding internally. She was intermittently in and out of consciousness, and she was in shock. A local nurse from the island also arrived on scene to assist, but since the nurse had very little emergency medical knowledge, SN MCDERMOTT took charge of the patient's care, managing her airway and treating her for shock. Meanwhile, the station's EMT equipment was transported to the scene by a Coast Guard Auxiliary boat. The victim's blood pressure was dropping, indicating a deepening of the patient's shock.

SN MCDERMOTT applied the newly arrived medical anti-shock trousers (MAST), thus rapidly and effectively treating this life-threating condition. A Coast Guard helo was requested to MEDEVAC the woman, because the seas were running too high for a safe journey back to the mainland by boat. Since SN MCDERMOTT suspected that the woman also had back injuries, the scoop stretcher and a long spine board were put on before the woman was flown off the island. SN MCDERMOTT accompanied the woman to the hospital, administering oxygen and monitering her blood pressure, pulse and breathing. Several weeks later the woman had fully recovered and was released from the hospital. Incidentally, her husband was arrested by the local police. Because of her training and the proper use of the EMT gear, SN MCDERMOTT unquestionably saved

the life of the woman, who otherwise would have died at the scene of her injuries.

The above cases represent only a few of the hundreds of MEDEVAC Report Forms sent to Headquarters since the forms were distributed last Spring. To those EMTs and HMs who submit the MEDEVAC report Forms, as required by COMDTINST 16135.3, keep up the good work. Each case is carefully reviewed, and the data is stored in a computer in the Office of Health Services. There are three good **reasons why you should take care when** filling out the MEDEVAC Report Form. First, it serves as a record of what you did for the patient and in what condition you delivered him. Second, the form serves as an aid in performing your secondary survey, and as a **reminder to frequently monitor the** patient's vital signs. Finally, it allows us to evaluate the number and types of MEDEVACs performed, so we can modify the curricula at the EMT and HM schools (if necessary) and provide better medical equipment to the SAR units.

The EMT School at TRACEN, Petaluma began classes again last month. Coast Guard personnel wishing to attend should submit their names to Commandant (G-PTE) through their chain of command. Graduates of the EMT School should check with their administration office to see that they have been awarded the EMT Qualification Code (HD). A recent decision has been made to award the qual code to graduates of civilian EMT Schools as well, so long as these graduates earn certification in the state in which they were trained. A **COMDTNOTE will be forthcoming shortly announcing this decision.**

SAR BIBLIOGRAPHY

The National Technical Information Service (NTIS), Springfield, VA 22161 has updated its bibliography entitled Search and Rescue Methods and Equipment, a Bibliography with Abstracts 1964 - June 1980. First published in 1977, the bibliography lists unclassified reports since 1964 available through the NTIS. The updated version covers 1964 to June 1980. The publication number is PB 80-812837 and the price is $30.00.

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